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**UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND**

**REPORT TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**Report of the Executive Director**

**SUMMARY**

The present report responds to the following decisions of the Economic and Social Council: (a) 1997/59, on measures taken in implementing the provisions of the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and their relationship to measures called for by the Secretary-General in his programme for reform; (b) 1997/59, on follow up to General Assembly resolution 50/227 concerning funding arrangements for operational activities; (c) 1997/52, on work with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); and (d) 1997/61, on the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

A draft recommendation for Board approval is contained in paragraph 36 of the report.

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I. Follow-up to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 47/199 and 50/120 and Follow-up to ECOSOC Resolution 1997/59 of 11 July, 1997: Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly

1. On 16 July 1997, the Secretary-General introduced a programme for reform intended to cover all aspects of United Nations operations. The recommendations and actions contained in the programme, which UNFPA strongly and fully supports, build on earlier initiatives, including those carried out within the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) and in response to various General Assembly resolutions on operational activities, as well as the guidance provided by the respective Executive Boards of the funds and programmes. These recommendations guide UNFPA's plans for the development, implementation and monitoring of its programmes, as well as its interaction with its partners within the United Nations development system.

A. Programme Matters

Field coordination: The United Nations Development Assistance Framework

2. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the strengthened Resident Coordinator system are expected to further strengthen, and give greater coherence to, country-level coordination among the various partners of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), as well as among the various entities of the United Nations development system as a whole. Indeed, the UNDAF has been identified by the Secretary-General as the centerpiece for further optimizing and coordinating United Nations development efforts at the country level. Details are under discussion, but several individual components of such collaboration and coordination are already in place as a result of the efforts of the JCGP and such other initiatives as the coordinated and integrated follow-up to conferences. These include, among others, harmonization of programme cycles, the programme approach, the Common Country Assessment (CCA), theme groups and regular consultation and communication within the Resident Coordinator system.

3. The UNDAF pilot exercises have thus far resulted in first reactions that are quite clearly positive, especially in the important area of building a team spirit. Some problems have been encountered, however, in particular for a small organization such as UNFPA. The process promises to be a fairly time-consuming, resource-intensive undertaking, especially in the formative stages, and thus poses a formidable challenge for the Fund's limited staff. UNFPA has always accorded high priority to coordination with its United Nations partners, and the Fund is committed to continue the same, especially as the success of the UNDAF depends on streamlined coordination and a participatory approach. It also depends on how the Resident Coordinator carries out his or her role

in the process, as well as on the willingness of participating entities to examine existing programming procedures and requirements openly and objectively. The Fund has participated fully in all discussions and preliminary efforts to identify pilot countries, support field teams and train facilitators. The success of the UNDAF depends on its ability to respond to the priorities and needs of individual countries, while maximizing the comparative advantages offered by the United Nations system as a whole and taking advantage of the specific niche of each participating organization.

4. UNFPA is particularly aware of the need to ensure that there is adequate understanding and appreciation within the country teams about the different mandates and objectives of each of the participating organizations. UNFPA will continue to give special attention to ensuring that cross-cutting issues such as population and gender, for example, are adequately addressed in all UNDAFs. In implementing the UNDAF, it will be of crucial importance not to impose exercises that will duplicate past programming efforts or that will require a review of processes that are already completed. Flexible measures will have to be devised, therefore, to adapt the requirements of the UNDAF to completed or ongoing efforts in order to ensure that there is ownership of the process by all concerned. Another important requirement will be to ensure that the UNDAF is an inclusive, not an exclusionary, process.

Field coordination: The Resident Coordinator system

5. The undg and the mechanisms of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) are working to strengthen the Resident Coordinator system to enable it to provide better coordination and more efficient support to operational activities for development of the United Nations system at the country level. Progress is being made in some areas, for example, in the nomination of an increasing number of Resident Coordinators who come from a wide range of organizations in the system. This has widened the pool from which they are selected and improved the appraisal and selection process of Resident Coordinators. Still, further efforts need to be made in such areas as:

- (a) Development and application of a participatory performance appraisal system for Resident Coordinators;
- (b) Introduction of an independent assessment of the competencies for Resident Coordinators, to be carried out on an inter-agency basis;
- (c) Definition and adoption of a transparent and participatory selection process for Resident Coordinators;
- (d) Approval of revised terms of reference for Resident Coordinators and commencement of their application;

- (e) Recognition of the Resident Coordinator function as a career goal for the entire United Nations system;
- (f) Application of guidelines for annual country reports to include work-planning objectives for the coordination function;
- (g) Further progress on issues related to the linking of the Resident Coordinator function with that of Representative of any one of the UNDG or United Nations organizations;
- (h) Further clarification of lines of authority for Resident Coordinators.

6. UNFPA strongly believes that the Resident Coordinator must be able to function as a strong and impartial advocate for the goals of all United Nations organizations and for the development needs of the country concerned. It has therefore participated in all ongoing discussions, briefings and workshops aimed at expanding and clarifying this issue. The Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ), through its Working Group on the Resident Coordinator System, is helping to ensure that the Resident Coordinator system is a mechanism that is owned by the larger United Nations system. As a result, the headquarters-support function for the Resident Coordinator system is taking on an increasingly multi-agency character. For example, UNFPA has seconded a senior staff member to the UNDG Office.

#### National execution, national capacity-building and harmonization

7. UNFPA continues to extend the highest priority to strengthening the capacity of governments to coordinate population assistance in their countries and to enhance the capacity of national institutions to carry out population activities. The Fund's emphasis on promoting national execution through capacity-building has been reflected in UNFPA's programming guidelines, all of which have been recently revised. The Fund expects to be able to make concrete recommendations on ways of enhancing absorptive capacity of programme countries based on a study that is currently being carried out, the results of which will be reported to the Executive Board at its annual session in 1998.

8. Training of nationals is being offered in a number of areas, and national staff are increasingly being used in accordance with the Fund's Guidelines for the Recruitment and Administration of National Project Staff. In the context of UNFPA's Technical Support Services (TSS) arrangements, and as emphasized in the Fund's guidelines on TSS, top priority for technical assistance must be given to using national experts. Since one of the primary tasks of the Country Support Teams (CSTs) is to help build national capacity in the countries they assist, the CSTs provide technical backstopping only if national expertise is not otherwise available.

9. With a view to building national capacity, UNFPA provides support for national project personnel, including both professional and general service staff. Such personnel provide additional support to host governments in the implementation of UNFPA-supported activities and are paid in accordance with guidelines common to UNFPA and UNDP for the recruitment and administration of national project staff. UNFPA is committed to employing system-wide standards as and when they are determined by the UNDG under the new reform proposals.

10. A recent independent evaluation has confirmed that UNFPA has achieved notable progress in national capacity-building. For example, the Fund's assistance has produced encouraging results in such areas as policy formulation; strengthening of reproductive health delivery systems; incorporation of population and sex education in school curricula; research into linkages between population and development; and provision and upgrading of infrastructural capacity, including equipment. UNFPA has also consistently striven to ensure that materials produced by inter-agency task forces and examples of best practices are gradually expanded and further developed in programme countries with a view to strengthening national capacities.

11. Several specific programme-related matters require further work within the UNDG to clarify common approaches and definitions and to devise ways to streamline and standardize them. These include, among others, national execution; national capacity-building, including assessment of national management, monitoring, evaluation and audit capacities; and national salaries and consultancy fees. UNFPA is committed to participating in the efforts to reach decisions on these matters and to implementing them within the Resident Coordinator system. In situations where actual joint activities will not be pursued, the Fund will work with its partners to harmonize strategies, approaches and master plans in line with national needs and priorities.

12. An evaluation of the various modalities for executing UNFPA-supported programmes was conducted in response to a request made by the Executive Board in 1994. Its ultimate aim was to develop a set of performance standards and criteria that could be used in determining appropriate executing modalities. One of the conclusions reached was that UNFPA had promoted national execution by adopting an approach intended to complement the strengths and weaknesses of national institutions with the participation of one or more international agencies. This approach entailed assessing the strengths and weaknesses of both national institutions and external agencies in order to resolve areas of insufficiencies. The evaluation identified a set of criteria for assessing potential agencies for execution of UNFPA-supported projects. The assessment is to be conducted during the Fund's Country Population Assessment, at the time when the programme's strategic actions are being developed. The criteria are broken down into two main categories -- technical capacity and managerial capacity. The application of these criteria will help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of organizations in terms of their capacity for executing UNFPA-supported projects.

### Common services and premises

13. In the area of common services and premises, efforts are continuing to build on and expand the good start made by the JCGP. UNFPA has traditionally made use of certain services provided by UNDP under a subvention agreement and has participated in common and shared services arrangements. While the Fund has at times had concerns about the quality and timeliness of such services, it remains totally committed to the principle of common services and premises. UNFPA has consistently emphasized that certain management principles need to be observed in these areas: cost-efficiency, timely provision of high-quality services, transparency and full accountability.

14. On 15 September 1997, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of a United Nations Executive Coordinator for Common Services to head the Task Force on Common Services. The Task Force has established working groups to develop proposals for procurement; information technology; integrated management information systems; personnel services; financial services; legal services; transportation and traffic services; facilities management; and archives and record management. UNFPA, for its part, is committed to making progress in the UNDG and other forums on these and all related issues.

### Coordination at regional and subregional levels

15. UNFPA assistance for regional and subregional activities is designed to support programme interventions at the country level. For reasons of both cost and programme effectiveness, certain activities are better carried out at these levels. This is not always easy to do and is thus an area that requires continued attention. With the aim of maximizing coordinated technical assistance and bringing such technical assistance as close as possible to the activities it serves, UNFPA developed its current TSS system, with eight country support teams (CSTs) based in subregions throughout the world. The Fund draws on the wide range of expertise that is available under this system, in particular in the CSTs, which are composed of experts in various disciplines related to the core programme areas of UNFPA, most of whom come from within the United Nations system. The TSS system has also facilitated regular consultation and dialogue between and within the specialized agencies on technical and programmatic concerns and has created an environment that is more dynamic and has greater flexibility in responding to emerging needs.

### Decentralization

16. UNFPA policy in the past few years has been to expand decentralization in all aspects of its programmes in an effort to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of its programme delivery. At the same time, the Fund has stepped up monitoring of this process, particularly through its Policy

Application Reviews, in order to ensure that policies and procedures are being adhered to and to identify any potential gaps in the system. An overall review of the Fund's decentralization process has indicated that the time-lag between project appraisal and final approval has been reduced, thereby improving implementation and delivery rates, as well as facilitating an increase in the use of national experts in the formulation and implementation of projects. With its new programme guidelines, issued at the end of 1997, UNFPA is nearing full decentralization of programme approval authority. For the future, UNFPA intends to monitor this process carefully in order to overcome obstacles and remedy weaknesses.

### Monitoring and evaluation

17. UNFPA's revision of its monitoring and evaluation guidelines, including procedures as well as tools and instruments, has been part of the updating of programming guidelines that the Fund has undertaken in consultation with all of its United Nations development partners. Indicators for monitoring and evaluating programmes in UNFPA's three core programme areas (reproductive health, population and development strategies, and advocacy) have been developed as a result of expert group meetings and workshops, with participation from both within and outside the United Nations system. A particular challenge for UNFPA now is to complete its ongoing revision of its financial monitoring systems. Attention has been given to assessing and learning from past experience in programming UNFPA's support for national population programmes. This is being reflected in the Fund's country programme submissions to the Executive Board, which now seek to address lessons learned more systematically and to apply these lessons in the proposed programme. While more needs to be done in this area, this is a positive trend that the Fund will continue to strengthen. Moreover, the entire thrust of the comprehensive review of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action is based on such a lessons-learned approach.

18. The Fund's revision of its monitoring and evaluation guidelines coincided with a reexamination of monitoring and evaluation issues undertaken by the JCGP. A JCGP workshop on this took place early in 1997 during which technical issues and challenges were discussed. UNFPA also contributed to a technical meeting sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) on evaluation of reproductive health programmes.

19. UNFPA has also participated in consultations with the United Nations concerning the impact evaluation of operational activities for development. This evaluation is a system-wide exercise undertaken within the context of the General Assembly's triennial policy review of operational activities, which will examine in particular the impact of operational activities in regard to national

capacity-building. UNFPA provided inputs to the development of terms of reference for the evaluation and briefed the evaluators at headquarters as well as field levels. The Fund also collaborated with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in a desk study on UNFPA support of national capacity-building in reproductive health.

**B. Management, personnel and finance: Audit and aid accountability**

20. The main mechanism for the exchange and coordination of internal audit issues continues to be the annual Meeting of the Representatives of the United Nations Organizations and Multilateral Financial Institutions. The UNDP Office of Audit and Performance Review (OAPR), which includes the UNFPA Internal Audit Section, is an active participant in these discussions. At the same time, UNFPA management continues to employ mutually reinforcing means to communicate responsibility, assess performance and measure results in order to obtain assurances with regard to accountability, especially in the context of UNFPA's policy on decentralization. Primary responsibility for this rests with the Fund's Office of Oversight and Evaluation, which, among other things, conducts policy application reviews to assess, *inter alia*, where greater clarity in programme policy and technical guidance is needed to ensure substantive accountability under decentralization.

**II. Follow-up to General Assembly Resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1995 and to ECOSOC resolution 1997/59 of 11 July 1997: Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly**

21. UNFPA's experiences during the past two years have demonstrated the difficulties in trying to meet programme commitments under the current funding system, which by its nature gives rise to uncertainty and unpredictability. In 1996, for example, over 20 per cent of the Fund's total pledges were outstanding at year's end. This caused significant cash-flow problems for the organization and required that UNFPA draw down on its operational reserve to meet its programme commitments. It also created considerable uncertainty in programming at the country level. The Fund experienced a similar cash-flow problem in 1997, although the year ended on a positive note as several of UNFPA's major donors generously made additional contributions to the Fund.

22. These experiences point out the great need for a predictable, assured and continuous funding mechanism, perhaps through multi-year pledging or other means. UNFPA, and its partners in the United Nations development system, must be able to fulfill their programme commitments without encountering the disruptions and slow-downs in programming that result from uncertain and irregular funding patterns.

23. The funding situation must be examined within the context of the resource commitments agreed to in the Programme of Action of the ICPD: an estimated \$17 billion a year by the year 2000 for the implementation of reproductive health and family planning services, plus other basic actions for collecting and analysing population data. Two-thirds of these costs are to be met by the countries themselves; the remaining one-third, approximately \$5.7 billion in complementary resources, is to come from donor countries.

24. UNFPA submitted a conference room paper to the Executive Board at its annual session 1997 that examined the likely consequences of not meeting the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action due to resource shortfalls. The paper was later revised and submitted to the Board as a formal document (DP/FPA/1997/12 and Annex) at the request of the Board. It was introduced at the third regular session 1997 and will be taken up by the Board at its second regular session 1998.

25. The report projects readily quantifiable results of resource shortfalls, based on three plausible scenarios of future resource mobilization through the year 2000: constant growth trend (yielding a shortfall of \$2.1 billion), intermediate growth (shortfall of \$2.9 billion), and low growth (shortfall of \$3.8 billion). The likely consequences of these shortfalls include, depending on the scenario: (a) an additional 44 million to 80 million individuals or couples not using any contraceptive method at all in the year 2000; (b) an additional 130 million to 230 million unintended or unwanted pregnancies in the 1995-2000 period; (c) an additional 50 million to 90 million induced abortions in the 1995-2000 period; (d) an extra 59 million to 110 million unintended births between 1995 and 2000; (e) an additional 300,000 to 540,000 maternal deaths during 1995-2000; and (f) an additional 4.9 million to 8.9 million infant and child deaths during 1995-2000. The report explores future actions on the part of donor countries to strengthen their commitments to the full implementation of the ICPD agenda and examines how this may affect UNFPA's future resource level.

26. The reaction to the report has been relatively positive and constructive. Many regard it as an important contribution to the follow-up to the ICPD, particularly in its effort to begin a serious discussion on operationalizing the resource aspects of the ICPD Programme of Action and developing a joint resource strategy to assure its success. At the same time, some have raised questions about the report's working assumptions and methodology, as well as its accuracy concerning levels of bilateral funding. The second regular session of the Board in 1998 will provide the Board with the opportunity to discuss these and other considerations in depth, the outcome of which will be included in the report on the session.

### III. Follow-up to ECOSOC resolution 1997/52 of 23 July 1997: HIV/AIDS

27. The prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS, is an integral component of reproductive health care. UNFPA provides support for HIV/AIDS-

prevention activities in line with national AIDS policies and programmes and within the global strategy of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The main focus of UNFPA's activities is at the country level, and this is also where the Fund places its emphasis in working with UNAIDS. UNFPA support for AIDS prevention is integrated into ongoing programmes in reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health, service delivery, and information, education and communication (IEC). Revised guidelines issued as a follow-up to the ICPD recognize prevention of HIV/AIDS as an integral component of reproductive health. In 1996, the latest date for which firm figures are available, UNFPA provided assistance to 124 countries for HIV/AIDS activities (amounting to \$20.5 million -- \$19.5 million at the country level and \$1.0 million at the regional and inter-regional level), as compared to 114 countries in 1995 (\$20 million), 103 in 1994 (\$15.5 million), 93 in 1993, 84 in 1992 and 41 in 1991. Precise figures are often difficult to obtain since in many countries such activities are an integral part of reproductive health information and services.

28. UNFPA brings to UNAIDS the conviction that any organized effort to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS must be based on the right of women to control their reproductive and sexual health. UNFPA, in line with WHO, considers family planning, maternal health care, prevention of abortion and prevention of reproductive tract infections, including STDs and HIV, as the four most important components of reproductive health. By promoting and supporting effective interventions in these four areas, UNFPA assistance will help countries to secure and safeguard women's reproductive health, thereby enabling women to become full and equal partners in the process of development.

IV. Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/61 of 25 July 1997: Integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of the major United Nations conferences and summits

29. The vehicle for the coordinated inter-agency follow-up to the recent international conferences has been the three inter-agency task forces established under the ACC -- Basic Social Services for All (BSSA), Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development, and Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods for All -- as well as through the inter-agency committee following up on the Fourth World Conference for Women (FWCW). UNFPA has been an active participant in all these United Nations system-wide mechanisms. The Fund chaired the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for Implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD, with the participation of 14 United Nations bodies. The task force set up working groups, each with a lead agency, to produce a set of guidelines on central ICPD themes.

30. The success of the IATF led to the establishment by the ACC of the three system-wide inter-agency task forces to galvanize the United Nations system follow-up around priority goals emerging from recent global conferences and to rationalize and strengthen the mechanisms for delivery of

coordinated assistance at the country and regional levels. Factors contributing to the synergistic collaboration and coordination achieved by the Task Force include the commitment of the participants to the work of the Task Force, a clear statement of goals, and broad-based institutional administrative support. These were able to overcome several constraints, including limited resources and lack of time and human resources.

31. Significant lessons learned on coordination from the experience of the task force on BSSA include:

- (a) Task-focused objectives and working through informal mechanisms provided increased synergy and promoted greater collegiality and coordination;
- (b) Clear objectives provided a strategic focus;
- (c) The "task manager" approach within the ACC held out great possibilities for coordination and collaboration.

32. It is now up to the Resident Coordinator system to use the end-products of the BSSA to implement programmes and to produce training modules in the Turin Training Centre in Italy that will facilitate their optimal use by United Nations and national staff. Broad-based involvement of all development actors including the civil society will make for a better utilization pattern of the products. It is expected that the outputs of the BSSA task force will be linked to the CCA, Country Strategy Note (CSN) and UNDAF processes.

33. In addition to its active participation in the integrated follow-up through the various task forces, UNFPA has addressed key issues that have emerged from the conferences. For example, the Fund has striven to mainstream gender concerns into all of its activities and to promote the empowerment of women as a fundamental prerequisite to sound reproductive health. It has committed itself to be an advocate for gender equity and equality and has been an outspoken advocate for the elimination of harmful practices and all forms of discrimination against women, including female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual abuse and violence against women, among others. UNFPA has also actively promoted reproductive rights. For example, the Fund organized, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/United Nations Centre for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Roundtable of Human Rights Treaty Bodies on "Human Rights Approaches to Women's Health with a Focus on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights". This was the first time experts from all six human rights treaty bodies, along with representatives of United Nations organizations and NGOs, had been brought together to address a thematic issue.

34. UNFPA has been active in other areas as well. For example, since the Rio Conference, the Fund has acted as the Task Manager for monitoring the implementation of Chapter 5 of Agenda 21. It also participated in the review of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS), keeping the relationship between population growth and distribution and sustainable development in focus during this process. In response to the Habitat Agenda (notably paras. 125-127), the Fund continues to help Governments to address population issues in urban planning and to develop better databases for this purpose, as well as to create awareness of the integral importance of population issues for human settlements. Moreover, UNFPA has striven to create awareness of the relationship between food security and population and, where possible, to ensure that population factors are considered as important elements in matters related to food demand and supply, as called for in the Plan of Action of the World Food Summit. Finally, in view of the recognition that women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty, a theme common to the ICPD, FWCW and the Social Summit, most resources within the Fund's country programmes are directed towards the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society, whose reproductive rights are frequently ignored and who most often lack access to reproductive health care.

35. The momentum created by the ICPD and the other recent major international conferences has increased the importance of coordination and the integrated follow-up mechanisms that have been established in the context of the ACC and has provided a strong new basis for cooperation among the various partners in the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. UNFPA continues to play an active role in facilitating this process and has participated actively in all the initiatives undertaken within the undg for a collaborative approach for such activities. In the cooperation between UNFPA and the Bretton Woods institutions, much of the policy-level collaboration is in direct support of programme-level cooperation. UNFPA enjoys relatively good cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions and is working in a collegial manner to critically assess how the relationships can be improved within the cooperative framework of the undg, UNDAF and Resident Coordinator system.

#### V. Recommendation

36. The Executive Board may wish to take note of the Report of the Executive Director to the Economic and Social Council" (DP/FPA/1998/2), and decide to transmit it to the Economic and Social Council, together with the comments made thereon by delegations at the present session.

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